

Free Thought

The Largest Circulated Rationalist Monthly

The End of an Era

It is with deep regret that we announce the death on 18th September, 1978 of Dr. Abraham T. Kovoor, President of Sri Lanka Rationalist Association and an Honorary Life Member of Indian Rationalist Association. A militant and relentless Rationalist, as he was, he spent nearly five decades in fighting obscurantism. He was noted for his innumerable encounters with godmen and other miracle mongers.

Since he had no belief in soul he willed that his body should be donated to the local Medical College and his eyes to an Eye Bank. Both his eyes have since been grafted to two Indians.

He is survived by his only son Dr. Aries Kovoor, his wife having pre-deceased him in 1974 itself.

I R A in particular and the entire Rationalist Movement in the world in general have lost an eminent leader in the death of Dr. Kovoor.



LETTERS

FREETHOUGHT

Sir,

Your coverage of Dr. Madalyn Murray O'Hair's visit to India very nice.

—Abdul Hasnat, Dacca-2.

Sir,

Please convey my congrats to Ms. Vasudhara for her witty conversation captioned 'The Stupid Devotees'.

—Y.A. Lokhandwala, Bombay.

Sir,

I wish to point out one short-coming of "Freethought". Many times references and authorities are not adequately quoted. Particularly the Ramayana Special Number. Whose edition was utilized? What is the view of other critics on it? I think many critical readers would like to know a few more details. Moreover, the cartoons in that issue appeared to me rather cheap. Our attack should be intellectual.

—Y.A. Raikar, Shillong

[The sources have been acknowledged elsewhere in the issue itself Ed.]

Sir,

I am studying B.Sc. (Hons) III year. My father, Mr. A. Siva Rama Krishna is a subscriber to "Freethought". I very much like your magazine. I have also encouraged some of my friends to subscribe for it.

—A. Murali Mukund

Hyderabad

Sir,

In my view, it would be better to advertise "Freethought" in daily newspapers. I am saying this because, I am a rationalist from my 6th class but I came to know about our Association in my degree class.

I want to serve a lot to Rationalism. So I require some other friends. Because being alone I can't do anything as "one swallow does not make a summer" and "one flower makes no garland". I believe in the saying of Goethe which runs: "energy will do anything that can be done in this world; and no talents, no circumstances, no opportunities will make a man without it".

—Vijayakumar, Kurnol

FREE RATIONALIST

Sir,

Let me introduce myself as one of the thirsty, hard-up for knowledge, youngsters, of 25 years hailing from Kerala, the birth place of my master Mr. Abraham Thomas Kooroor. It was his literature that helped me form a firm stand on certain controversial aspects of life. I have to admit that I am a sort of a fellow who does his own thinking, which, I initially found, were matching that of my master. He is my master because through him I found my way.

Though I have studied his (and other great men like, M.O. Joseph etc) life history and am fully aware of his noble venture to enlighten the humanity, I am afraid, I still do not adequately possess knowledge — I mean, the teachings, researches etc. of him and men like him in India.

I am a convert — A fought-won convert from the clutches of religion and faith and such nothingisms. I know I am on the right path — absolutely free, free like air; but at the same time, am a social animal.

I wish to have more literatures, discoveries, analysis etc. regarding everything that is controversial, unorthodox, which, I am sure you publish to liberate those who are blind or chained. **COULD YOU HELP ME PLEASE TO HELP OTHERS TOO?**

—P. Manoharan, New Delhi.

Thought for the Month

"The fate of Bruno and Galileo remind us that papal corruption was just as deadly to free investigation as papal piety, but on a Rome that was as immoral as any city in history had ever been, the popes could smile."

- Joseph McCabe

Freethought

AN IRREPARABLE LOSS

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Though Dr. A.T. Koyoor had been a cancer and heart patient, his end has come rather suddenly. At the age of 82, the frail-looking leader has been intellectually agile and active. It was hardly a fortnight ago, he was prompting the IRA to file a defamatory suit in his name against the author of a forged declaration. Little could we imagine that he was close to a fatal heart attack.

An intellectual of rare courage and conviction, he belied the oft-repeated 'hoax' of the faithfuls that rationalism was only for the youths. In fact, he intensified his fight against miracles and superstitions in his seventies. Like Periyar E.V.R. and Russell he showed 'once a rationalist, always a rationalist'. Maturity meant mature rationalism.



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C. SESHADRI

It is in the fitness of things, like Prof. J.B.S. Haldane, he should have donated his body for medical research and his eye to the eye bank. He was a person who, while hospitalised after his first heart attack in 1959, refused the offer of prayer of the Bishop of Colombo, saying: "No, no, no. I came here for medical treatment, and I am improving under expert medical treatment. I do not want you to take a share of the credit for curing me".

Dr. Kovoov — The militant Iconoclast

The world-renowned rationalist and psychiatrist — Dr. Abraham T. Kovoov — President of the Sri Lanka Rationalist Association, is an outstanding scientist who has conducted intensive researches for over half a century into all types of alleged psychic, para-psychic and spiritual phenomena, and came to the conclusion that there is absolutely no objective truth behind such claims and beliefs. His contention is that all those who claim to possess psychic, para-psychic and spiritual powers are either hoaxers or mentally deranged persons suffering from Cryptesthesia. He says, "nobody has and nobody ever had supernatural powers. They exist only in the pages of scriptures and sensation—mongering newspapers."

Dr. Kovoov is widely travelled, and has delivered public lectures in many countries and world conferences. Stories from his Case Book were and are serialised in newspapers and magazines in various countries. One of the stories from his Case Book was filmed in Malayalam, Tamil and Telugu. "NAMBIKKAI" a Tamil Drama, which was staged several times before packed

audiences, is also based on another story from his Case Book.

Dr. Kovoov, who has a life-long mission to teach people to go by reason and not by superstition, was born at Tiruvalla in Kerala on 10th April 1898 as the son of the late very Rev. Kovoov Eipe Thomma Katthanan, the Vicar General of the Mar Thomma Syrian Church of Malabar. After completing his school education at the Syrian Christian Seminary, Tiruvalla he proceeded to Calcutta for higher education. At Bengabasi College, Calcutta, he specialised in botany and zoology. After two years' service as Assistant Lecturer in botany at the C.M.S. College Kottayam, Dr. Kovoov migrated to Sri Lanka in 1928. During his first year at Jaffna Central College young Kovoov was asked to teach scripture to the final year students in addition to botany. Next year there was no scripture in Kovoov's time table. When questioned about it, Rev. Cash said with a smile in his face, "Abraham, I know you produced the best result in scripture. All your students passed in scripture, but all of them lost their religions!"

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We salute him, his identification with rationalism and his undaunted spirit. Who says Kovoov is dead? Kovoov cannot die because his ideas and ideals continue to live. By his crusade against godmen and spiritualists, he has created thousand Kovoovs. Let not godmen and babas heave a sigh of relief. We are aware that they are receiving encouragement from the R.S.S. elements. But this will not be allowed to last long. Babas and acharyas are an anachronism and their cult shall be exterminated. This is the fittest tribute we can pay to our departed leader. Let us vow to expose every baba—small or big.

In this connection it is heartening to find the Tamilnadu Government announcing in their 10-point E.V.R. centenary programme that they would train 15,000 educated volunteers to spread Periyar E.V.R.'s rationalist messages apart from distributing EVR's books to libraries and setting up a museum. Removing caste names from street name boards was long over-due. This, we hope, will be followed up by the other measures like removal of idols and pictures from Government Offices buses etc. prohibiting poojas in and wearing of caste marks to the offices; and other measures suggested in our last issue.

Leaving Jaffna Central College in 1933, when Rev. Cash retired and left Sri Lanka. Dr. Koveer joined Richmond College, Galle and later St. Thomas College, Mount Lavinia. In 1959 he retired from services as the head of the science department at Thurstan College, Colombo. It was only after retirement from service that Dr. Koveer began to speak and write about his life-long research into the field of spiritualism and psychic phenomena. The obituary notice of Dr. Koveer's wife, who died in November 1974 created a big sensation in Sri Lanka, even in the Island's parliament. The obituary reads, "Mrs. Acca Koveer expired leaving behind neither a mind nor a 'spirit' to bother credulous people." According to her wish her body will be removed to the Faculty of Medicine, University of Sri Lanka, Colombo, from Tiruvalla, Panankada Lane, Colombo-6 today (Friday at 8 a.m. no funeral, no cremation and no flowers.).

As an investigator of so-called occult phenomena Dr. Koveer has busied himself in removing from the minds of ignorant people their unfounded fear about ghosts, and debunking the claims of miracle performers, charmers, astrologers, palmists, spiritualists, numerologists, necromancers and all other types of charlatans who hoodwink the gullibles by claiming occult and spiritual powers. He has slept in haunted houses and walked in cemeteries in search of ghosts. He has commenced the most important events of his life at inauspicious moments. To convince the ignorant masses that all those who claim miraculous powers are pure hoaxers or mentally sick persons, he had thrown out challenge against them to pay Rs. 1 lac to one who can demonstrate supernatural or miraculous powers.

Although Dr. Koveer threw out this challenge twelve years ago in 1963, and was published all over the world, nobody was able to win one cent from him. Dr.

Koveer has been a terror to those who cheat innocent and gullible masses in the garb of holy men or miracle performers. His fervour to wipe out superstition from the face of earth, and establish a humanitarian tradition makes Dr. Koveer one of the noblest personalities of the twentieth century. ○

Koveer's Conquests

Child of a Christian cleric's home
in Kerala he grew;
with Knowledge called from life and tome
to Lanka's shores he flew

In training minds and teaching youth
A lifetime he has spent.
To hold aloft the torch of truth
A heavy price it meant.

Denouncing superstition, fraud,
Astrologers, such kin,
He boldly states there is no God,
No soul to lose or Win.

His challenges to one and all
in countries far and wide,
To godmen, saints and mystics call
Their spurious claims to chide.

With courage and with restless zeal
For years he has pursued
The quest to serve the public weal
And prophets false subdued.

At eighty years when lesser men
Would weaken in the cause,
He beards the lions in their den
And wins renewed applause.

May he be spared for many years
To lead increasing bands
Of men who disabuse the fears
Which haunt our troubled lands.

-Mervyn Caise Chetty

(From Dr. Koveer Octogenary Souvenir)

Readers' Forum

Marriage — The Right Perspective

It is neither as a mere fashion nor as an appeal that girls and parents of girls bring forth their grievances about the dowry system. Apart from the economic factors about which even a lay man is aware, there are other issues which involve human dignity and basic decency.

Even a casual perusal of the Matrimonial Columns in the various papers and magazines throw light upon the attitude of men towards their would be brides. Unmindful of their own looks or status they need brides who are slim, fair good-looking, well-to-do, educated (but less than themselves) and well trained in domestic choices, with of course, talent in all or some of the fine arts. It is as if they need an advertisement model with all good qualities imbibed in her, not understanding that to be human is also to be fallible. It is such type of men, who are more in number, who also complain about the "treasure hunt"—the bride.

Material well being and to achieve this educational qualifications are a must. No girl can marry a man who is not qualified enough to take up a job and earn, even if she has a job, she would like to be independent and not have dependent husbands whom she will have to support throughout her life.

Man does not sacrifice by marrying a girl who is not as qualified or earning as much as himself. He does so only to cater to his ego and whims and fancies. For man wants not an equal life partner but a house-keeper with folded hands around the house, humble in his presence, looking up to him as a super human—being, ignorant, hence submissive girl inflating his ego.

A Girl does not marry a man for his position but she can not afford to ignore it either, if she is pragmatic and sensible. No one can live without the basic comforts. A comparison with the unfortunate many can only be a theoretical play, it can never be a realistic possibility. All said and done, a girl or her father can not probe into the mental capabilities and psychological factors. They atleast have to make sure that the would-be bridegroom is well placed and materially well off.

Selfishness is not a monopoly of any sex. It is patent at times in few and at other times in others. Girls are not greedy when they choose better qualified guys. They are only reasonable and practical and show their high ability to judge and put forth their judgements into action. It is only because a girl does not want to be the victim of a man saturated with inferiority complex, not minding her own ego being hurt, prefers a better-qualified husband.

To be honest even poor men demand dowry which is too high for girls of their status. It is not as if girls are crazy to be married. If they are given the education, job, independence and social-status even as single girls, not many girls will be interested in marrying and undergoing the

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drudgery of a dull, monotonous, colourless, painful and submissive life that they have to spend as housewives.

Classless society and love marriages are welcome but even there the interest in education, position material or the external paraphernalias will present themselves in the choice of a partner. Man cannot be apart from his external achievements and educational qualifications, only a teen—ager or an infatuated girl will be blind to all these realities in choosing a life partner. After all, success in life also depends on the right choice of a life partner for otherwise her life becomes frustrated and she is unable to fulfill any of her ambitions.

Pointing one's fingers at others is easy but it is too hard to find solutions. A single person's frustration at finding a suitable partner (as per socially accepted norms) cannot & must not lead to broad conclusions about the system in general. To reform this system of dowry & marriage we—every one of us—must try and act as we think, and break away from the set standards of the anachronistic society of ours. It is only when those who want to marry decide not to give room for any external factors to intervene in their choice that the scapegoats to dowry evil will disappear. Individuals may also find the right atmosphere to evaluate one another and marry with individual and independent responsibility.

—Ms. S. SUDHA

IRA's New Office Bearers

At the Annual General Body Meeting of I. R. A. Mr. Yahya Akbarali Lokhandwala, President of Bombay Rationalist Association was unanimously elected as President of I. R. A. for the ensuing term. The following are the other Office Bearers and Managing Committee Members.

Vice-President: Mr. S. L. Bharati
General Secretary: Mr. A. Surya
narayana

Joint Secretary: Mr. G. S. Ranjan
Treasurer : Ms. S. V. Vasundhara
Committee Members: Mr. C. A. Seshadri
Mr. Dinesh Nettar

Some more Members would be co-opted to the Managing Committee in due course.

In line with the new rules adopted at the Meeting, a national Executive Council was constituted. Besides the Managing Committee Members and the Presidents and Secretaries of the Affiliated Associations, the following were elected to the N. E. C.

1. Mr. M. Prabha, Trivandrum
2. Mr. P. K. Narayanan, Bangalore
3. Mr. G. K. Nettar, Mangalore
4. Mr. M. V. Ramamorthy,
Hyderabad
5. Mr. R. Lakshminarayana
Bangalore
6. Mr. Bhatt, Bombay

News and Notes

IRA MOURNS THE DEATH OF Dr. A. T. KOVOOR

A meeting of the Members of IRA was hurriedly convened on 24-9-78 to pay tributes to the late Dr. A.T. Kovoore who passed away on 18-9-78. Mr. S.L. Bharathi, Vice-President, Mr. A. Suryanarayana, General Secretary, Mr. C.A. Seshadri, Editor, FREETHOUGHT and others spoke at the meeting. The following resolution was passed at the end of the meeting:

"This meeting of IRA members held on 24th September 1978 deeply mourns the irreparable loss of Dr. A.T. Kovoore, IRA's friend, philosopher and guide. He was a veteran fighter, the nightmare of godmen, a rationalist of the highest intellectual ability, a crusader against obscurantism and superstition, a friend of all progressive thinking people and a source of inspiration for rationalists all over the world. He has led IRA's 4 Divine Miracle Exposure Campaigns enthusiastically and successfully and cried a halt to many godmen's frauds. The meeting conveys its condolences to the Sri Lanka Rationalist Association and members of the bereaved family particularly Prof. Aris Kovoore, his son and his devoted personal assistant, Ms. Adeline."

* *

Mr. SURYANARAYANA REVIVES Dr. KOVOOR'S CHALLENGE

It is a rude shock to the International Rationalist Movement to have lost Dr.

ABRAHAM T. KOVOOR, the world renowned Rationalist who with his open challenge kept the Godmen and other miracle mongers under check right till his death. As per the terms of his challenge, the same had come to an end on 18-9-78 when he breathed his last.

In order to continue to prevent the occultists from raising their ugly head again, Mr. A. Suryanarayana the well known and dedicated Rationalist and General Secretary of Indian Rationalists Association had come forward at Dr. Kovoore's condolence Meeting held on 24-9-78 at Madras to fill the gap by throwing open a challenge of Rs. 1,00,000/- which is almost identical with that of Late Dr. Kovoore. Like Dr. Kovoore, Mr. Suryanarayana too maintains that nobody has and nobody ever had any supernatural powers. Though he is not very rich and he can just raise a little over Rs. one lac, his dedication, search for truth and anxiety to silence the godmen prompted him to throw the challenge.

Mr. Suryanarayana was closely associated with Dr. Kovoore in his innumerable encounters with godmen. He was the mastermind behind the four long All India Divine Miracle Exposure Campaigns organised by IRA with Late Dr. Kovoore as its principal participant. These campaigns made Dr. Kovoore's name a household name all over India and made him a nightmare for the godmen. As a result of his close and continuous contacts with late Dr. Kovoore, Mr. Suryanarayana learnt over the years the types of frauds perpetrated by the godmen on the gullibles, their modus operandi and how they could be detected by a well trained, experienced and inquiring mind. He has thus been able to acquire the tools and techniques required in this field in a comparatively shorter time from the pio-

FREETHOUGHT

near Dr. Kovoov who had to do a lot of research for nearly 5 decades.

It is the duty of every civic-minded citizen to compel the thousands of charlatans, who fleece the innocent and ignorant masses under the pretext of possessing supernatural and occult powers, to take up this challenge and prove the truth of their claims. If they refuse to take up his challenge under some lame excuse, people should shun them as big hoaxers. In order to encourage the followers of the godmen named at the end of the challenge, a reward of Rs. 500/- is offered to the person who persuades any of them to accept the challenge.

Experienced and confirmed Rationalists who are interested to function as Mr. Suryanarayana's NOMINEES for conducting the Preliminary Tests in different parts of the country may please write to him at once offering their services. Preference will be given to Members of IRA.

* *

ELOCUTION CONTEST

The West Godavari District Branch and Eluru Town Branch of Indian Rationalist Association have jointly organised an Elocution contest at Eluru on 3-4-78 under the Presidentship of Mr. M. Veekata Ramana Reddy. The subject was "Rationalism and its need for the society".

Welcoming the large gathering, Mr. A. Sambasiva Rao, the District Secretary, explained how the society is being exploited in the absence of a rational and scientific outlook.

The following have won the prizes :
First Prize : Mr. C.T. Rama Sarma
Second prize : Ms. S. Girija
Third prize : Mr. M. Suresh

Consolation prizes :

Mr. S.R. Suri
Mr. Y. Kanaka Rao
Mr. V. Raja Rao
Mr. V. Radha Krishna Raju
Mr. V. Subba Rao
Mr. T. Viswanathan
Ms. K.S. Chalam and
Mr. P.C.N. Sarma

While Mr. G. Satyanarayana Murthi, Lecturer, Sir C.R.K. College, Mr. P. H. V. Somayajulu, Advocate and Mr. A. Sarweswara Rao, former, M.L.A. acted as judges, Ms. J. Sumanthamma distributed the prizes to the winners. The prizes were donated by Mr. M. Seetharama Swami and Mr. A. Satyanarayana.

After the veteran freedom fighter Mr. K. Ramala spoke on the ways and means of constructing a Rationalist Society, Mr. S.R. Suri proposed the vote of thanks.

The highlight of the function was the rationalist slogans voiced by a IV standard student Master G. Sudhir Phani Chandra Nischal.

* *

BLACK MAGIC HAUNTS POCHAMPALLY

The following news item published in "The Deccan Chronicle" of 5-8-78 under the above caption was received from Mr. T.S. Sreenivasa Rao, Kakimada.

Pochampally which gave a lead to the nation in Bhodan movement is of late gripped with superstition. There were a few cattle deaths and other mishaps in the village and all these were attributed to the acts of black magic practised by some body among them.

A fortnight back a villager who was suspected to be practising black magic was about to be hanged publicly, but for the intervention of Mr K.N. Reddy Bhongir, M.L.A. He advised the villagers not to take law into their own hands.

In Anantharam village, two persons were axed to death by the villagers who they believed were practising black magic. The local police are investigating.

In Pedda Ravula Pally, on the bank of Musi a Sorcerer was claiming to cure cattle diseases. Many flocked to him but his tricks did not click. Enraged the villagers severely beat him. On receiving information the Animal Husbandry officials rushed to the village, gave vaccination to the cattle and averted further loss of cattle. The disease known as 'Liver Fluke' is now under control.

A social worker said that the adult education centres were the need of the hour in such villages for weaning the people away from such superstitions.

* *

"RESIDENTS" OF THE CLOUDS

A thorough analysis of big rain-drops revealed that they contain vitamin B12 nicotine acid, biotin, i.e. the products of living organisms' vital activities. Scientists concluded from this that a multitude of micro-organisms and even *algae* live in the air. Some of them temporarily 'settle' in the cumulus clouds at an altitude of six to nine kilometres. They find everything they need for life there water microelements oxygen, nitrogen and strong sunlight. All the vital processes -- photosynthesis metabolism and cell growth -- take place in the microorganisms in the clouds. Until quite recently it was believed that spores, fungi and pollen could not survive in the upper atmosphere. This belief seems wrong. A detailed study of "cloud life" will pave the way for using this a *microflora* as a biological means of combating atmospheric pollutant.

* *

DEFACING GITA STAMP

The Bombay Rationalist Association has rightly protested and brought forth the wastage involved in the order of our enlightened Government to deface only a corner of the Gita Stamps.

Propitiating religious susceptibilities of certain persons, the Prime Minister, Morarji Desai, has succumbed to order postal department to deface just a corner of the newly issued Gita stamps, though he has rightly stated that Krishna could take any amount of defacing.

Do the said several people who have protested against the defacing of the Gita stamps include the dubious ISKCON, as apprehended by a number of thinking people? If normal procedure of defacing used postal stamps hurts the religious susceptibilities of certain persons, the Government should have thought of it prior to printing Gita stamps.

However, the remedy suggested by P.M. will be very costly as every poor postman will be on his toes while stamping the post mark very cautiously on each of the envelopes carrying Gita stamp so as to deface only a very small corner of it. Any one can well realise that such process will result in wanton waste of time as instead of normally stamping more than 10 envelopes the postman will be able to stamp hardly one envelope within that time.

Moreover, out of fear of getting more than a corner of Gita stamp defaced number of postmen are likely to be inclined to put the post mark fairly away from the stamp, which may result in the obvious temptation by many to surreptitiously use the said stamp again.

Hence it would be wiser for the Government to withdraw Gita stamps and dispose them off by selling them to the several people who feel their defacing amounted to sacrilege.

—Y.A. Lokhandwala, President
Bombay Rationalist Association, Bombay.

GOD CHECK MATED

(contd. from last issue)

A. Harnath and A. Suryanarayana

SECTION 3 - GOD AND RELIGION

- 3.1.1. Do you follow your religion at least partly ? (a) Yes (b) No
(If yes, proceed further and If No, straight-away go to the next section)
- 3.2.1. Do you think there is a separate god for each religion ? (Ref question 1.5.1.) (a) Yes (b) No
- 3.2.2. If yes, how are the people controlled by different Gods ? (a) The god of one particular religion helps people of that religion
(b) The god of my religion controls all people
(c) All gods jointly control all the people
- 3.2.3. If 'No' to 3.2.1, do you pray to gods (forms) of all religions ? (a) Yes (b) No
- 3.2.4. If there is only one god, what is separating one religion from the other ? (a) Man-made barriers
(b) Prophets' commandments
- 3.3.1. Who framed the 'dos' and 'don'ts' of religion initially ? (a) god(s) (b) Prophet(s)
(c) disciples of the prophet(s)
- 3.3.2. If 'a' or 'b', do we have the right to change them ? (a) Yes (b) No
- 3.3.3. If 'yes' how can we change them without knowing the purpose of the practices, and counter effects of the changes in either heaven or hell, if any ?
- 3.3.4. If 'no' to 3.3.2. can we practice the religious customs which are against the present day laws and civilization ?
- 3.3.5. If 'c' to 3.3.1. how do the religious scriptures become so sacred ?
- 3.3.6. If 'c' to 3.3.1. do you think the promoters of the religions had better knowledge than what we are having today ? (a) Yes (b) No
- 3.3.7. Do you think the present religious customs are exactly what they were in the beginning ? (a) Yes (b) No
- 3.3.8. If no, who is responsible for the changes ? (a) god
(b) people of various times
(c) Evolution (d) Science

- 3.3.9. Do you follow the original practices or the current practices ?
 3.3.10. If 'c' how do you choose what practices to follow ?
 3.4.1. Do you think the religious practices stand to reason ?
 3.4.2. If no, what is to be done ?
 3.5.1. Do you support the caste system ?
 3.5.2. Do you believe that ancestors of your family did not have matrimonial and/or sexual connections with other castes ?
 3.5.3. Can a Hindu discard his caste alone while adhering to other tenets of Hinduism ?
 3.5.4. In your opinion how did this caste system come into being ?
 3.6.1. What is the reason for many flourishing ancient religions becoming extinct now ?
 5.7.1. If your answer to question 1.3.1. is a, b or c, how do you consider Allah, Brahma, Christ or even Jehova as the case may be, as god ?
 (If your answer is not 'a' what you are trying to defend is not God but something else)
 3.8.1. After answering all the questions in this section Do you still believe in religion ?
 3.8.2. Do you still think that your belief in god stands to reasons
 (If your answer is 'yes' against 3.8.2, proceed to the next section)
- (a) Original (b) Current
 (c) Partly 'a' and partly 'b'
 (a) according to my conscience
 (b) according to my convenience
 (c) no method
 (a) Yes (b) No
 (a) Bear with it
 (b) Reform it (c) Scrap it
 (a) Yes (b) No
 (a) Yes (b) No
 (c) Not sure
 (a) Yes (b) No
 (a) Originated from the body of the god
 (b) Created by ancient people
 (c) Evolved on the basis of division of labour
 (a) They were not created by god (s)
 (b) The subsequent religions are more rational than the earlier ones
 (c) They became out-dated
 (d) they were not mercenary
 (a) they conform to the dictionary meaning for the word 'God'
 (b) Though they do not confirm to the meaning of God, I presume them to be 'gods'
 (a) Yes (b) No
 (a) Yes (b) No

SECTION 4 GOD AND DESTINY

- 4.1.1. Do you think man has free will ? (a) Yes (b) No (c) Partly
 (If ' No ' or ' partly ' complete this section
 and if ' yes ' go back to question 1.3.1)
- 4.2.1. If not, do you think man has fate ? (a) Yes (b) No
 (' Fate ' means " power " predetermining
 unalterably from eternity ?)
- 4.2.2. If so, who determines it ? (a) God (b) Unknown force
- 4.2.3. Do you also think other living creatures and (a) Yes (b) No
 non-living matter including mountains,
 rivers, towns, etc. also have destiny ?
- 4.3.1. If god determines the fate when did he deter- (a) At the time of creation
 mine it ? of universe
 (b) At the time of birth of
 the particular man or
 creature
 (c) Every day for all people
 creatures for that day
 alone
 (d) Every moment he will be
 controlling all people/
 creatures
- 4.3.2. If ' a ' or ' b ' what is the use of praying to god, (a) God may change his
 when it is already predetermined ? earlier decisions
 (b) No use
 (c) It is also destiny
- 4.3.3. If ' c ' or ' d ' to 4.3.1. how can we expect the (a) Astrologer knows what
 astrologers/palmists etc. to predict which is decision god is going
 yet to be determined by God ? to take on different
 matters
 (b) going to astrologer etc.
 is stupidity

- 4.4.1. If god predetermines man's destiny, what are the factors he takes into consideration before he determines the fate ?
- (a) Good and bad deeds of one's previous birth (s)
(b) Good and bad deeds of one's parents
(c) Just arbitrarily
- 4.4.2. If 'a' to question 4.4.1. who is responsible for our deeds in the 'FIRST' birth ?
- (a) We ourselves
(b) god
- 4.4.3. If 'a' to question 4.4.1, what control does god exercise on man ?
- (a) Mere clerical work
(b) Nothing
- 4.4.4. Do you think that the reason for the continued prosperity of Americans is they did good in their previous births ?
- (a) Yes (b) No
- 4.4.5. If so, do you also think people who committed sins are born in backward countries like 'sacred' India ?
- (a) Yes (b) No
- 4.5.1. Do you think that even though the destiny is predetermined the results of a 'work' depend upon the time at which it has been started ?
- (a) Yes (b) No
- 4.6.1. If so, is it not predetermined at what time it should be started ?
- (a) Yes (b) No
- 4.7.1. How many 'destinies' you think exist ?
- (a) One destiny for each man
(b) One single consolidated and comprehensive destiny for all human-beings
(c) One single consolidated and comprehensive destiny for all the living beings
- 4.8.1. Whose destiny causes a man's prosperity, death etc.
- (a) His own destiny
(b) His wife's destiny
(c) His children's destiny
(d) His entire family's destiny
(e) The destiny of the entire world

Ex. I The death of a head clerk in an office is caused by . . .

- (a) His own destiny
- (b) His wife's destiny
- (c) His children's destiny
- (d) His family's destiny
- (e) His superiors's destiny
- (f) His 'subordinates' destiny
- (g) His entire department's destiny
- (h) The destiny of the person who is appointed in his place
- (i) that person's wife's destiny etc.
- (j) the destiny of all living creatures in the world

Ex. II. A train accident resulting in a number of deaths and injuries is caused by . . .

- (a) The destiny of the crew
- (b) The destiny of the ground staff
- (c) The destiny of the railway Minister
- (d) The destiny of all the people travelling in it
- (e) The destiny of all the people not travelling in it
- (f) The destiny of the Govt. as a whole
- (g) The destiny of entire contry
- (h) The destiny of the entire world

After answering all the questions in this section do you still think

4.9.1. That man has no free will ?

- (a) Yes
- (b) No

4.9.2. Your belief in god stands to reason ?

- (a) Yes
- (b) No

(If your answer is 'yes' against 4.9.2. proceed to the next section)

SECTION 5 - GOD AND SOUL

- 5.1.1. Do you believe in Soul ? (a) Yes (b) No
(If yes, complete this section if no, straight away proceed to the next section)
- 5.1.2. What exactly you mean by the word 'soul' ? (a) Life
(b) A power that controls the body and/or mind
(c) The immaterial part of man (Dictionary meaning)
- 5.2.1. Do you think soul has a mass ? (a) Yes (b) No
- 5.2.2. If 'yes', where do you think the soul exists in the human body ? (a) Brain
(b) Heart
(c) Lungs
(d) All over the body
- 5.2.3. If no, to question 5.2.1. how is it connected to a particular body ?
- 5.2.4. If no, to question 5.2.1. how do you identify a particular soul as belonging to a particular body ?
- 5.3.1. What are the functions of a soul ? (a) Controlling the body
(b) Controlling the mind
(c) Controlling both the body and mind
(d) Inner voice
- 5.4.1. Do you think soul is eternal ? (a) Yes (b) No
- 5.4.2. If 'yes', how the first set of souls came into being ? (a) There is no beginning for souls
(b) God created the souls
- 5.4.3. Where were the souls lying before the origin of life on this earth ? (a) on some other planet
(b) they were living within the god
(c) there were no souls at that time
- 5.4.4. Do you think that the number of souls is constant ? (a) Yes (b) No

- 5.5.1. At what point of time does a soul enter a particular body ?
 (a) At the time of conception
 (b) Before birth
 (c) Immediately after birth
- 5.5.2. At what point of time, does a soul leave a particular body ?
 (a) Just before death
 (b) Immediately after death
- 5.5.3. Do you think it is possible for the soul to come back to the same body after some time from which it had left ?
 (a) Yes (b) No
- 5.6.1. Do you think that only man has a soul or all animals, birds and all other creatures also have souls ?
 (a) only man
 (b) All creatures
- 5.6.2. Are there separate species of souls for different species of creatures or same type for all ?
 (a) Same type
 (b) Different types
- 5.7.1. Do you believe in rebirth ?
 (a) yes (b) No
- 5.7.2. If so, do you think that the soul is the only continuing factor ?
 (a) Yes (b) No
- 5.7.3. If you think soul is eternal and only bodies perish, how does a soul move from one body to another ?
- 5.7.4. Why generally does the soul not remember its own past in the previous births ?
- 5.7.5. How then can some people claim to remember their past lives ?
 (a) Due to mistakes committed by God
 (b) God allows only some souls to remember
 (c) They are false claims
- 5.8.1. What does the soul do after leaving the body ?
 (a) Enters into another body
 (b) Goes to heaven or hell
 (c) Becomes a spirit
- 5.8.2. If b how can the soul enjoy/suffer physically when it does not have a body ?
- 5.8.3. Can the soul decide which body to enter ?
 (a) Yes (c) No
- 5.8.4. If yes, do you think that souls are independent of god ?
 (a) Yes (b) No
- 5.8.5. If not, are movements of souls controlled by god ?
 (a) Yes (b) No
- 5.8.6. Do you think soul is capable of judgement ?
 (a) Yes (b) No
- 5.8.7. Do you think that human weaknesses such as ego, selfishness, hatred, vengeance, anger etc. are all caused by 'soul' ?
 (a) Yes (b) No

- 5.9.1. Can the same soul exist in two bodies simultaneously? (a) Yes (b) No
- 5.9.2. Can a soul enter a 'living body' with a soul? (a) Yes (b) No
- 5.9.3. If yes, which soul would control the body? (a) The original soul
(b) The new soul
(c) Both the souls jointly
- 5.9.4. If 'a' what is the purpose of the new soul entering the living body? (a) Shortage of new bodies
(b) Past attachments
- 5.9.5. If b, what would be the position of the original soul while the new one is controlling the body? (a) The original soul will go out of the body
(b) The original soul ceases to exist for the time being
- 5.10.1. Which do you think is responsible for the sins (or wrongs) we commit? (a) Body
(b) Soul
- 5.10.2. If 'a' why should the new body with the old soul suffer for the sins of the dead bodies?
- 5.11.1. Do you think that people suffer/enjoy in a particular birth according to the deeds of their previous birth? (a) Yes (b) No
- 5.11.2. If yes, whether the cause is only the immediately preceding birth or all the previous births put together? (a) Only the preceding birth
(b) All the previous births
- 5.11.3. Do you think that the sufferings of the human beings are experienced by their bodies or by their souls? (a) Bodies
(b) Souls
- 5.11.4. If 'b' when the person goes mad, unconscious etc. how does the soul suffer?
- 5.12.1. Do you perform Death Anniversaries for your parents etc.? (a) Yes (b) No
- 5.12.2. If so, do you also believe that the food offered to the Brahmins and/or animals, birds etc. would reach the soul of the dead persons? (a) Yes (b) No
- 5.12.3. If yes, do you also believe that the souls too feel hungry and they need food? (a) Yes (b) No
- 5.12.4. In case the souls of the dead have already entered into some new bodies what would happen to the food offered to the souls?
- 5.12.5. When should one perform the death anniversary of his father? (a) on the date of death of his mother's husband
(b) On the date of death of his actual father
- After answering the questions in this section do you still think
- 5.13.1. Soul exists? (a) Yes (b) No
- 5.13.2. your belief in god stands to reason? (a) Yes (b) No
(If your answer is yes, against 5.13.2. proceed to the next section)

Glimpses of the Enlightened ones

—MUKUND

Some rare individuals realise the existence of God within themselves. Realisation is not an ordinary matter. It implies the discovery of God within the mind, and an ability to have a personal communication with Him. Such persons are of varied and strange categories. To meet them is an experience. Here are a few assorted glimpses.

Meet Maharaj. Looks awful like a dirty beggar, having only a small cloth around his waist. Never takes bath, nor washes his mouth. Where does he stay? What does he do and eat? Nobody knows. Occasionally he is seen somewhere, children harass him, throw stones at him, someone saves him from the distress. But the followers know his worth. They touch his feet, persuade him to visit their homes. He may rarely agree, but if he does, fortune is expected to smile upon the host.

Maharaj is totally selfless, tries to impress none, never gets angry, expects nothing and expresses no frustration. If you give him something, he would immediately pass it on to some one. He utters very few words and the listeners discover deep meaning in them.

Maharaj belongs to a reputed family, mainly of doctors. They attribute his behaviour to some curse-cum-blessing according to which one person of the family in almost every generation is to turn an ascetic. At times, Maharaj visits his relatives. They treat him with high esteem. They admire his strange ways. He may drink water from the municipal drain. The enlightened ones make no discriminations, the doctors argue.

Shree Swamy is magnetic personality. Tall, handsome, well built he keeps long hair and wears a clean saffron dress. A good orator, powerful organiser, an authority on the Gita, has command over English and Sanskrit. He runs one institution and tours all over the country.

Swamiji's visit to a town is an event in the local history. A reception committee of top bureaucrats and business magnates is formed to chalk out his programme. The privilege of hosting the Swamy goes to the most fortunate one amongst them. But the issue of distributing his lunches and dinners is not easy. Swamiji has one condition; the host has to give a donation of five hundred rupees to the Institution, if he wants Swamiji to eat in his house. It is no problem; enough hosts are available. The problem is of selecting the few out of them. Some Dayaram Motiram may offer Rs. 1000/- instead of Rs. 500/- and Manusukhani and Sons may raise it to Rs. 2,000/-. Bureaucrats dislike this auctioning in spiritual matters. Somehow, a compromise is reached.

The lectures attract large audience. They are open and free. The elite of the town is all there, beautiful elegantly dressed ladies, suited booted gentlemen. A fleet of posh cars waiting outside. Swamiji holds the audience spell-bound with his humour, satire

and drama. He makes them laugh heartily. But with the slightest thing going wrong he gets angry and may scold any high dignitary publicly. Astonished listeners are convinced of the superiority of the spiritual power over the mundane one. Swamiji maintains that all religions are equal and finally proves that Hinduism is supreme. Audience go home richer and prouder.

Bhola Baba is a Muslim, speaks Urdu, but has followers from all religions. Dress is the first attraction in his case. From head to foot, he is clad in a satin drapery of dazzling red, green, & yellow colours. He would be found seated on a *gaddi*, surrounded by half a dozen *chelas* in similar costumes. You feel as if, some drama based on Arabian Nights is being staged. Baba smokes *charminar* without break. But he has no time to light the sticks. Alert followers do the needful for him and ensure the continuity of smoke. In the intake of tea, Baba surpasses Krishna Menon. The host looks after the party, though Baba also spends a lot, visitors flock for consultation etc., throughout the day. In the evening the *chelas* have a free time. They change their Arabian costumes, put on bell-bottoms, and go out for cinema shows etc. There is no secret about anything. You learn that they are well-educated men working in various offices. When Baba goes on tour, they accompany him. Their superiors, who are Baba's devotees, grant them special French leave for the holy purpose.

Dada works on a very good post in a private concern. An amateur astrologer, with a saintly behaviour and personality, he is known to have spiritual powers. Thus he has grown into a holy friend, philosopher and guide, to many higher-ups. They talk highly about him, touch his feet, disclose their personal and official problems and seek his advice and remedial measures. Rarely have so many officials—disclosed so many official secrets, to a single non-official person. Obviously, Dada as a third party, has a far better insight into the situations, than any one of the involved officials. Moreover being a selfless gentleman, he does not carry tales or betray anyone.

But among Dada's followers, you find persons who are wronged as well as those who do wrongs. If he were an ordinary man he would have invited enemies for being partial to the right as against the wrong. But he keeps all parties that approach him, satisfied. This is because of spiritual enlightenment.

Usha is not a permanently enlightened person. She has only recurrent short spells during which she established commune with God. Usually it is on every Thursday evening, but special performances could be there. She is required to be worshipped and looked after, when the divine spirit enters her person, causing physical torture and mental abnormality. Visitors gather for putting questions and seeking solutions. They are educated, and some of them very rich. She demands nothing and does not get much. Most of the clients are half-hearted, and wish to take chances without risk.

Usha is a good-looking girl but with a physical deformity and weak health. She is employed, but has hardly any prospects of getting married. Almost an unwanted member of a joint family. Usha gained importance only after developing this faculty.

Once I met a happy-go-lucky man. He was rubbing tobacco and lime on his palm, for chewing. I asked him what pleasure does one derive from it. Confident came the reply, "It enables you to have a direct talk with God".

That reminded me of a story. Once a man was in search of a true Yogi, who has discovered God. He met many but was not convinced by any. Finally he saw a barebodied *sadhu*, seated on the cremation ground. The man asked him, "Baba, tell me frankly, whether you have discovered God. What is the truth?" The *sadhu* replied, "Nothing has been discovered by me. The truth is that the mosquitos are biting me too much". The man exclaims, "Finally I have discovered a true Yogi, who told me the truth!" ○

Women and Vivekananda

Margaret Bhattu

As a biography **THE MASTER AS I SAW HIM** by sister Nivedita interests me particularly because it is an intimate portrait of Vivekananda presented by a woman reared to a different value-system from that which she finally took on as her own. But not only does the book record many of his thoughts and ideas as faithfully as possible, it also gives details of his attitude towards women, their education, and the future he visualised for them in modern Indian society.

That Nivedita on her part did not seek to impose any more radical view-point is in keeping with her belief that "discipleship is always serenely passive" within the presence of the Master. "I have plans for the women of my country in which you, I think, could be of great help to me," the Swami said to her, and like many other women before her, she was convinced she had heard a Call.

IDEAL WOMAN

To Nivedita herself the Ideal Woman was personified in the Holy Mother, widow of Ramakrishna Paramhansa. What were the qualities that so impressed this English-woman? The fact that Sharadadevi worshipped her husband and stood like a rock "through cloud and shine, for the fulfilment of his every word." Not only did she call him Gurudev or Divine Master, "neither by word nor action conveyed the slightest trace of self-assertion with regard to him."

Simone de Beauvoir, writing in *The Second Sex* analyses the single "supreme

compensation" society bestows on women: Religion. "Man enjoys the great advantage of having a God endorse the codes he writes, and since man exercises a sovereign authority over woman, it is especially fortunate that this authority has been vested in him by the Supreme being."

Man is therefore Gurudev by divine right, and a suitable fear of God represses any impulse to revolt or self-assertion. A husband's will is the will of God.

SIMPLICITY WORSHIPPED

Describing the life she lived on the banks of the Ganges as part of Sharadadevi's household, Nivedita writes: "The Indian home thinks of itself as perpetually chanting the beautiful psalm of custom." In this ritualism is preserved all the sacred past as an unflawed legacy to be handed on to the future. In combination with the quest for ideal purity, and the worship of motherhood, this custom and tradition guides and restrains Indian character. "The east worships simplicity, and herein lies one of the main reasons why vulgarity is impossible to any Eastern people."

This simplistic conclusion reads strangely today after half a century when one reflects that empty ritualism has vulgarised, corrupted and enervated Indian society; depriving it of its essential dynamism.

Vivekananda, however, claimed — and rightly so — that character is everything and custom nothing. Yet few of his ideas about women project this view, even though his belief was that the Order of Ramakrishna was to strive to "effect the exchange of the highest Ideals of the East and West."

SUTTEE ADMIRER

He was suspicious of change. "Will is not strengthened by change. It is weakened and enslaved by it. But we must be always absorbing. Will grows stronger by absorption. And consciously or unconsciously, will is the one thing in the world that we admire. Suttée is great in the eyes of the whole world because of the will that it manifests."

It is notable that very few Indian reformers working within a religious milieu have ever made any really radical departure from their own social conditioning. Like Gandhi, they have reinforced and reaffirmed traditional values regarding the status of women. So of Vivekananda, Nivedita wrote:

UNFAITHFUL WIDOW

"With all his reverence for individuality he had a horror of what he called the crime of the unfaithful widow. 'Better anything than that,' he said. The white unbordered sari of the lonely life was to him the symbol of all that was sacred and true."

Any system of education that could not accommodate this view appeared to him as "frivolous, luxurious and de-nationalised." In other words, the rights of women and widows as human beings beyond what an unjust and oppressive social convention allowed them appeared to him as both unnecessary and un-Indian!

What then was his concept of a "modern Indian woman"?

VIVEKANANDA'S WOMAN

Not very different from what it had always been: She must be a person with intense trustfulness and devotion to her husband, along with traditional loyalty to his kin. Despite this he foresaw possibility of change with a certain growth of individualism emerging from later marriages

for girls, and even a chance of marriage by choice.

But he could not imagine a modern Hindu woman without the old power of meditation. "Science she may learn—but not at the cost of meditation."

In short, to him the ideal education was that which would "exercise the smallest possible influence for direct change on the social body as a whole." The italics are mine to show how stability is equated with stagnation, and the old order is reaffirmed when passive virtues like submission and spirituality are exalted, and woman's role remains the mother's heart, conjoined with the hero's will."

The curriculum he hoped to see Nivedita carry out in the running of her schools was to be one of rigorous spiritual and mental training in which physical fitness was essential. She confesses that he was somewhat vague when it came to details; but he was stirred by the grandness of his concepts. He wished to see produced a race of women who would become the "Bashi-Bazouks of religion"—the Bashi-Bazouks being the personal bodyguard of the Caliph, enslaved from boyhood and reared in the fanatical belief that to lay down their lives for him was a religious ideal. Fierceness coupled with courage were their characteristics. A similar identification with masculine firmness is found in Christian female saints like St. Bridget, St. Catherine of Siena and Joan of Arc in whom courage and fierceness added up to single-minded bigotry and self-righteous arrogance.

However, Hindu female Bashi-Bazouks were to eschew self-advertisement and emotional posturing, but work in silence, with sweetness and steadiness. The best teacher suited to this task of shaping a

new modern Indian woman were to be widows as a class, since they alone stood for total abnegation and self-sacrifice, and in their sexual purity were living **suttees**.

SEX FEARED

Since negation was at the root of Vivekananda's thinking, his monasticism was a religious commitment. When "unmarriedness" is a spiritual asset, obversely sex becomes suspect as a sin. The early Christian Fathers were suspicious of woman's nature because they feared a loss of integrity through them. "It must be understood, however," explains Nivedita of Vivekananda's faith, "that his dread was not of woman, but of temptation." In keeping with this dread he himself said: "There are women whose very presence makes a man feel driven to God. But there are equally others who drag him down to hell."

Where a religion imputes sin and impurity to sex, women become suspect. Their very nature threatens. The concept of brahmacharya is a jealous preservation of one's seed against the draining away of essential spiritual energy. True man-hood places soul above body, and it cannot be achieved without control of manhood."

However, he thought it possible for marriage to achieve an ideal when the husband finally accepted the wife as the mother through a mutual adoption of celibacy. Marriage was a bond for all eternity, life after life, and widow remarriage was repugnant to him because it negated this concept. But marriage was not inevitable for all women, not if they preferred to remain celibate in order to pursue a life of intense piety.

His views on marriage were orthodox with maternity a religious ideal for women:

"In my opinion, a race must first cultivate a great respect for motherhood, through the sanctification and inviolability of marriage, before it can attain to its ideal of perfect chastity."

Only the Roman Catholics, he said, with their insistence on marriage as inviolate and indissoluble had succeeded, like Hinduism, in producing great chaste men and women of immense power. Arab countries where Islam prevailed regarded marriages by forceful possession as valid, and dissolved them at will. Neither was there in Islam any cult of the deification of the virgin.

FEMININE INFERIORITY

In *A History of Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir describes the cult of the virgin as the only condition of equality offered by man to woman. Mary did not know the stain of sexuality, and she was then exalted to become the inverse aspect of Eve the sinner. But the glorification of the Virgin Mary was only possible "in her acceptance of the subordinate role. 'I am the servant of the Lord!' she said, and kneeling before her Son accepted her inferiority."

"The cult in essence is a masculine victory, achieving the rehabilitation of woman through the accomplishment of her defeat."

To Vivekananda the most real faithfulness was that which virginal widows displayed, and he saw this faithfulness as "the very pillar on which social institutions rest."

For him the ideal woman of character was "the orthodox Hindu Brahmin Brahmacharin."

The Vacuum Argument - Myth, Mystery or Fact?

P. K. Narayanan

(Contd. from last issue)

Part III

BY THE COURSE OF HISTORY:

Scientific community of the idealistic stratum has always been happy about keeping a secret desire to evade a clear solution to the problem of the mind and to keep it mysterious and extra-ordinary. They cherished the dual status of body and mind. Because of dualism in their approach and out look, a galaxy of noted Scientists who spent considerable part of their career in studying neurology and human mind had to end up at the altar of mysterious "spirits" beyond cognition.

The studies of R. Yerkes (American), W. Koehler (German), Dubois Rayon (German) and Charles Sherrington (English) could not go beyond the limit of animism and dualism which they 'enjoyed' very much.

The history of the concept of mind as framed by Scientists through the ages was subtle and subjective in essence. Nobody could even define what "mind" was; this is notwithstanding the fact that even in ancient times, there were Philosophers like Alcmaeon who had seeded the spirit of scientific attitude

in the field of psychology. Alcmaeon had regarded brain as the seat of knowledge.

Later in the fifth century B.C. the great Hippocrates elaborated Alcmaeon's ideas and he wrote that all the mental attitudes—pleasure, joy, temper, plays, grief sadness, dissatisfaction and pity—originate in the brain. "Because of it", he said, "we go mad, rave, are seized with alarm, fear either at night or at day break".

Such brilliant thoughts and studies on mind based on materialistic principles originated years ago. These Scientific studies were the order of a healthy era. But in a clumsy sweep of a subsequent social order, they had to give way for idealism and dualism.

DOWNFALL

Spiritualism swallowed the foundations of materialism propounded by Hippocrates. This calamitous transformation marks one of the darkest events in the history of the evolution of human thought and scientific progress.

What was the reason for such a downfall? The answer to this question would be a single worded sentence—Religion.

It all started with the fall of the Roman Empire. European Middle Ages were a dark period which kicked antique science into the ditches of religious dogma.

The Church became Supreme in every field of human activity. It became the ruler and the decision maker. It was Church that decided what the Society should be like. It was the Church that decided how Citizens should think, profess and lead their lives. That "bastion" of feudal system fought and destroyed every attempt to penetrate the mysteries of Nature with fire and sword."

Wars and famines and the destruction of cultural centres of ancient Greece and Roman Empires completed the digging process, manoubered and supervised by the Church. Growth of Science reached complete stagnation. A fertile ground for flourishing growth of superstition and obscurantism was prepared. Religious myths became the order of the day. Monks who were notorious for their ignorance, professed the doctrine of "sinful body and spiritual soul". Any attempt to interfere with their 'doctoring' was looked on as a sacrilege heresy and severely punished.

The result was a whole of mass knowledge of mind codified under the pious name of 'Psychogy' based on idealism and spiritualism owing its origin to the dark and ages of religious supremacy.

GLITTER OF CHANCE

With passage of time, however; one finds traces of change in the approach and attitude of Scientists. Isolated attempts were made now and then by these scientists who were forced to go out of the traditional ways of mysticism and dualism in the field of natural science. However, it took centuries before more correct views were formulated about the nature and origin of mind.

A glance at the changing attitude of physicians in the treatment of mental diseases through years would show the progressive growth of scientific approach to the problem of mind: because it was on the basis of the concept of mind that any treatment of insanity was to be formulated.

There was a time when it was universally believed that insanity was the result of possession by evil spirits and black magic. Torture and stake were the cures

suggested for these. But during the Renaissance, there was considerable development in the field of Natural Science and medicine. Hippocrates' views about mental illness again got widespread recognition and his works were rediscovered after the dark Ages. Some of the Scientists started thinking in terms of brain and nerves in connection with the phenomena of mind and mental illness.

As in the field of philosophy and political thoughts, French Revolution presented an important development which opened up new vistas in Psychiatry, too. The Revolution proclaimed liberty, equality and fraternity of men. These lofty principles of humanism permeated deep into the conscience of men all over the world. The result was a new awakening in every field of human thought and activity.

To be Contd.

A Message from I R A'S New President

I am overwhelmed by the confidence reposed in me by the Members of the Indian Rationalist Association at their Annual General Body Meeting held at Madras, by unanimously electing me as their President for the ensuing two years, as telephonically conveyed by the General Secretary yesterday and I hereby assure all of them that I will strive my best, overcoming the impediment of impaired health, to live upto their expectations.

Warmth of your active co-operation will certainly lend me added courage to persevere for the achievement of our cherished aims, for which we all shall have to put up concerted effective fight and I am sure none of you shall be wanting in it.

Bombay Sd. Y. A. LOKHANDWALA
18-9-1978

IRA's New President



MR. Y. A. LOKHANDWALA

Mr. Yahya Akberali Lokhandwala born on 9-3-1916 in a respectable Bohra Business family in Gujarat has been an active and ardent social worker and social reformer.

His public life started as early as in his 17th year and over these years he has rendered invaluable services to several social organisations. These include Saifee Health Home (organising President), Godhra Yuvak Sangh (President), Kisan Sabha, Gumasta Mandal, Vidyarthi Mandal, Balkan-ji-Bari etc. (organiser), Panchmahals District Youth league (General Secretary) Godha Survaajanik Vanchanalya (Organising Secretary), Gujrat Provincial Congress Committee (Member), Gujarat Province Youth League (Working Committee Member), Peoples' Volunteer Brigade (Organiser), "JANATA" Gujarat Weekly (Editor), Gujarat Province Gumasta Mandal (Jt Secretary), Rajpipla Yuvak Parishad

(President), Gujarat Rajasthan Yuvak Parishad (General Secretary), Santacruz Welfare League (Hon. General Secretary), Society for Eradication of Social Injustices (Hon. General Secretary), Juhu Andheri Janata Mandal (Hon. General Secretary), Suvichardharak Mandal (Hon. Secretary), Bombay Rationalist Association (President), etc.

He is also actively connected with many trade associations, and is also Director and partner in many business firms.

At the age of 23 he was arrested and sentenced for 6 months and confined in the Sabarmathi prison. He was a delegate to the All India Congress Session held at Ranchi in 1940 and again during the Quit India Movement he was arrested in August 1942. He was imprisoned till January 1945. After the devastation of Godhra in the holocaust perpetrated by obscurantists, he had to migrate to Bombay as a destitute in 1948.

He toured Soviet Russia as Secretary of the Delegation of Afro-Asian Solidarity Association wherein Dr. Pratap Chandra Chunder, the present Minister of Education & Social Welfare was a Member. He also visited England, Europe and Egypt in connection with his business.

In 1959 he was married to Dr. Sudha Saraiya, M.B.B.S., D.G.O. C.F.P.

With his rich experience in public life and an unusual dedication to whatever tasks he takes up, he is sure to make fitting successor to the outgoing President Mr. Kamala Shankar Pandey who influenced and attracted Mr. Lokhandwala to Rationalist Movement in late 1930's. △

Film Review

JADU TONA

-Ravi Preet

So far superstition had been the prime reserve of tricksters, who paraded as envoys of God on this earth. If ever novelists, story-writers had to mention these so-called supernatural occurrences, they used to mention particular incidents or traced the whole affair to some human agency at the end. Film makers usually invested money on "clean" stories except when it is being made for certain religious sects. In all the horror movies and suspense thrillers, the riddle was solved or appeared to be solved. This was the trend except few exceptions here and there.

Jadu Tona (Hindi) is a serious deviation. God photography and camera tricks have been used to preach irrational beliefs. The film under review does more than just entertainment. Ghosts and spirits had been playing an important role in cinema but movie makers showed the way out at the end, like in "Bees Sal Baad" (Hindi) and "Lal Kuthi" (Bengali). In Jadu Tona, emphasis is on the other side. Evolutionists shall enjoy the rejoinder to Darwin's theory with the opening comments on spirits rebirth etc. In search of Ghost, the story writer had to take us to a village, because there the setting at least convinces the "border-line" minds. Further a chubby child is shown to encounter a "wandering spirit" immediately after singing praises of village greenery and scenic beauty. A beautiful butterfly, a black cat etc. are used to introduce the concept of spirit. The lesson for children is to beware of beauty of country-

side and charm of nature lest they fall prey to wandering spirits. Even rationalism of educated elder sister (Rina Roy) gives way as Nagaich's camera moves on more tricks like possessed child walking on ceiling, milk turning into blood (a good news for researchers in serology!) furniture on fire with no ill effect etc. etc. The only person who keeps his balance up to the end is a neuro-specialist (Feroze Khan), probably keeping in view the microscopic minority of rationalists. But the child is shown to be cured by a Baba and not the physicians. The lesson being — Do not spend money for good medical care but purchase few lemons etc. for a pooja to be conducted by a sadhu. The movie comes to an end with a prayer to the presiding deity of Baba—Bajrang Bali. A significant increase of crowds is witnessed in the Hanuman Temples, following the screening of Jadu Tona in respective town and cities.

Every rationalist is recommended to see the movie because he is likely to encounter many people, who will be possessed after seeing Jadu Tona. If a patient talks about a butterfly, a black cat etc. send a congratulatory note to Nagaich on his "contributions" to Indian Cinema. △

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Inside — Full Page	Rs. 150/-
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Book Review

Why I Left the Ministry and became an atheist

By G. VINCENT RUNYON

(Superior Books, San Diego, Calif. U. S. A.
Available from IRA Madras Rs. 5/-)

This is a thoughtfully written book and an intensely sincere account of one man's personal passage from his spiritual vocation towards a finer reality.

Runyon's parents were both earnest Christians, active in the church, and his training and upbringing was conventional. He never doubted for a moment that he would be a minister. "I loved the church atmosphere, its friendliness and its music," he writes.

After a stint in World War I he returned to America resolved to make a great deal of money; but in 1922 he spurned this ambition as piffy and decided to join the ministry. He was 21 years old—"keen on doing good and being useful."

While at seminary he was introduced to historical heresies as part of his studies; but skepticism did not shake his faith though he emerged as a modernised preacher rather than a fundamentalist.

He spent twelve years in the pulpit and admits to being entirely sincere because his belief was sincere. "No man walked and talked with God more than I.

God was my constant companion." But over the years he was changing imperceptibly and near the age of forty he quietly quit without any fanfare or publicity. It was a personal decision which concerned himself alone, for his wife, brothers, sisters and married daughters are Methodists, and one married daughter is a Catholic. This is in keeping with his belief that everyone has the right to worship or not to worship, as they choose.

"It would hardly be accurate to say that I turned my back on God or was disobedient to him. My conversion to atheism was, as I have said, an intellectual matter. Be assured that as long as I believed a God existed, I communed with that God. It was only when I could no longer intellectually believe, that this communion with him ceased. How could I do otherwise?"

Since his search was on intellectual one he leads us through many of the authors to whom he turned. He mixed with men of different mind, people he had dismissed as sacreligious in their godlessness, and found them to be cultured, with a refined scientific approach to knowledge. They had high ideals and were not irresponsible for their humanism far outweighed narrow sectarianism.

But even after having launched out on to a perilous path, he still searched and questioned, moving from humanist to agnostic to rationalist and sometimes to secularist until many years of study brought him to the conclusion that god is a myth born of fear and "all gods are but figments of the imagination or outright inventions of the mind." He finally arrived at being an atheist, describing this arrival as an "evolution"—the logical end of a long quest.

His disenchantment led him to examine his former role as a minister and the wrong that organised religion does in promoting men of such faith. "I bread wishful-thinkers when I urged my troubled parishioners to pray," he writes. "When I taught these people to lean heavily on God's everlasting arms, I was unwittingly teaching them to be parasites and procrastinators." If they never received any answer to their prayers it was because there was no god to hear them and he, their pastor, "was too dumb to know it."

Runyon is outspoken in his condemnation of ministers of the church—quacks, he calls them, pious swindlers and sellers of heavenly property, pretenders to knowledge who can be equated with crystal-gazers and fortune-tellers. He deplores the general educational level of the average pastor as a person who has never been taught to think—or read.

"Knowledge, like a sword, conquers and destroys all error and untruth"—which is why the Catholic church has a censored index. The Bible is not Holy Writ and its contents have caused irreparable damage in urging people to violence, witch-hunting, bigotry, persecution and religious wars and it has always stood in the way of scientific truth. To people's argument that the church should remain because the good it does now outweighs the bad, Runyon's reply is that "the minds of little children are being contaminated by religion's superficial philosophy. What injures the children of today injures the world of tomorrow."

He is convinced that the church is least-suited to train the young through its parochial schools where discipline is still induced through the medieval concept of fear. Juvenile delinquency has become a

national problem in America as a result. Good behaviour should be stripped of its piety, and taught as a skill and an art in self-development, self-realisation and self-sufficiency.

He is not a pessimist with a sorry alternative to religion's grand illusions, but offers tidings of greater joy—freedom from fear; fear of hell-fire, of ghosts, spirits and the Devil.

"Without a god there is plenty to do," he writes, since the onus of solving the problems mankind fall squarely on our own shoulders. Prayer and piety are pointless, but "the world needs you. Have a goal. Have a philosophy. No religion or church has a monopoly on morals or ethics despite what the clergy say." Runyon knows, because he has travelled the entire distance in his search of a truth based on reason and humanism.

"Devils Do Exist"

Some time ago a school master in West Germany replayed for seventh-formers a tape supposed to provide a notion of exorcism. The Frankfurter Allgemeine describes this as the reproduction on tape of the sufferings of girl student Anneliese Michel "exorcized" months on end by two priests and her own parents. She died of exhaustion, and the "exorcists" were brought to trial. The school master explained to indignant parents and the school administration that he viewed this sad affair as "divine justice" and has also sought to make his pupils realize that "devils do exist".

—New Times—

Test for Reason

No. 13

—Dinesh Nettar

A land lord in a village had a lot of cash, jewellery and other valuables. As he had no belief even in the nationalised banks he had kept all his belongings in three large iron safes with number locks and he kept the code numbers for the three lockers as a top secret that he did not want to even note down in his personal diary.

One day he suddenly died of heart attack. When his sons tried to get the code numbers from his diary, in one page they came across the following clues:

Safe no. 1 — Dividend: ~~12037507~~ ~~4062479~~

Safe no. 2 — Divisor: 123 7

Safe no. 3 — Quotient: 97809

(Divisor)	xxxx	(Quotient)	xxxx	(Dividend)
	xxxx	1	xxxx	1
	xxx	2	xxx	2
	xxx	3	xxx	3
	xxxx	4	xxx	4
	xxx	5	xxx	5
	xxxx	6	xxx	6
	xxxx	7	xxx	7
	0	8	xxx	8

Can you please help them to decipher the codes logically (not by trial and error)? The line nos. indicated above may please be used for explanations. X indicates blanks.

Rules:

1. The entries should be received on or before 15-10-1978.
2. There is a prize of Rs. 10/- in the form of books to be sent to the winner. If there are more than one correct entry, the prize will be decided on lots.
3. Readers are requested to quote their membership number of subscription number.

Solution for Test for Reason no. 12

1. Mrs. A and Mrs. go to the temple
2. Mrs. A comes back
3. Mrs. A and Mrs. C go to the temple
4. Mrs. A comes back
5. B and C go to the temple
6. B and Mrs. B come back
7. A and B go to the temple
8. Mrs. C comes back
9. Mrs. B and Mrs. C go the temple
10. Mrs. C comes back
11. Mrs. A and Mrs. C go to the temple

The following have sent correct solutions for Test for Reason No. 12

1. Mr. T.P. Kuchhiraman Ayyancheri
2. K.K. Kishore Zami Golvepall
3. V.K. Chiranjivi Rao, Anakapalle
4. B. Pardha Saradhi, Coal Chemical Complex P. O.
5. M.T. Satyanathan, Calicut
6. T. Kanamail, Ananthapur
7. K.K. Subramanyam, Keredu, P. O.
8. S.V. Paul, Kazipet
9. Rajendra Nayak, Mangalore
10. M. Jayasheela, Ujire

Mr. M.T. Satyanathan, Calicut gets the prize in the draw.

FREETHOUGHT

IRA Endowment Fund

After we renewed our appeal for liberal contributions for IRA Endowment Fund there was only one contribution for the fund. The fund has now reached only Rs. 2008-65 as per the details given below :

As per September '78 issue — Rs. 1,508-65
Mr. Yahya Akberali Lokhandwala, Bombay (President, Bombay Rationalist Association)

--- Rs. 500-00

Rs. 2,008-65

While we are grateful to Mr Y.A. Lokhandwala for his handsome contribution we once again appeal to the other dedicated rationalists who are really interested in the permanent survival of the rationalist movement to rush their contributions. Demand Drafts and Cheques may please be drawn in favour of Indian Rationalist Association.

—Treasurer, I. R. A

To Our Contributors

We invite short stories, jokes and translations from Indian languages of items of interest to rationalists. Reproductions have to acknowledge original source.

New Members

We heartily welcome the following new members :

Member-ship No.	Name	Place
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PATRON MEMBERS :

PMF-3	△ Mr. Andrew Vena	Philadelphia (USA)
-------	-------------------	--------------------

LIFE MEMBERS :

LM-55	Mr. Banamali Barik,	Berhampur (Orissa)
LM-56	△ Mr. G.R. Meunon	Ahmedabad (Gujarat)
LM-57	△ Dr. I.J.S. Jaswal	Shillong (Meghalaya)

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M-460	Mr. Sashi Kumar, B.Sc.	Calicut (Kerala)
M-461	Mr. P. Manoharan	New Delhi

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—General Secretary, I.R.A.

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